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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2747
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 9174
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 000811

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: INSIDERS VIEW OF ELECTORAL REFORM
COMMISSION

REF: A. ABUJA 643
[1B](#). 07 ABUJA 791
[1C](#). 07 ABUJA 1155
[1D](#). 07 ABUJA 1855

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

[11](#). (C) Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) General Secretary and Electoral Reform Commission (ERC) member John Odah (strictly protect) told Poloff on April 14 that the ERC has been active despite maintaining a low profile in the press. Odah confirmed that the commission has remained out of the press to allow members the freedom to work outside the spotlight (Ref. A). Odah told Poloff neither Yar'Adua nor anyone else from the GON has attempted to interfere in the ERC's work. Though he characterized ERC Chairman Uwais (the former Chief Justice who certified the fraudulent 2003 elections) as promoting dialogue, he couched his statement, noting that the hard work of coming up with concrete recommendations remains.

[12](#). (C) According to Odah, the full ERC meets every other week, immediately following meetings by the five working groups: electoral systems, institutions, judicial issues, history, and memoranda (an internal group providing oversight of the distribution of documents from the public to the other ERC working groups). The ERC continues to gather information and has scheduled a series of public hearings across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to run May 12 to June 20. Odah remained hopeful that the ERC will conclude its recommendations in August as scheduled.

[13](#). (C) COMMENT. Despite Odah's optimism, that the ERC is still in data collection mode and will remain so for the next two months based on its public hearing schedule, does not bode well for completing its work in August. In addition, Odah's couching of his praise for Uwais leads us to believe even Odah has his doubts as to how non-partisan the Chairman will remain once the discussion turns to recommendations. To be effective, not only must the ERC develop concrete recommendations, but the Yar'Adua administration must demonstrate the political will to carry them through -- no short order in Nigeria's "do or die" political environment.
END COMMENT.

[14](#). (C) NOTE: The NLC was outspoken in its criticism of the 2007 elections and called for results that "contravene the will of the people" to be overturned (Ref. B). That said, it was the NLC's leadership that called for calm and forestalled the potential eruption of May Day observances into

demonstrations by choosing to depoliticize the events (Ref. C). The NLC has remained active in its calls for electoral reform, partnering with the Nigerian Bar Association and the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI) to hold workshops and formulate concrete recommendations which were submitted to the ERC. END NOTE.
SANDERS